

Yale University Band Gives a 'Sousa' Concert

By HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

OUT THEY CAME, the young men and women of the Yale University Band, dressed in a replica of the uniforms worn by the men of the Sousa Band. Out came Keith Brion, the conductor. He wore a white wig, sported a white mustache, wore white gloves, was liberally bedecked, and carried in his hand a baton, actually used by John Philip Sousa.

The idea was to reconstruct an actual Sousa concert, and that is what happened on Monday in Carnegie Hall. Not everything went according to Sousa's book. He used to give concerts lasting three hours and more, and that would try the patience of an audience today.

But would it? At the end of last night's concert everybody stood, cheered, made no motion to leave, and seemed prepared for another hour if Mr. Brion and his players were ready.

The printed program of Sousa's concerts never looked long, but that was because he gave one or more encores after virtually every number. Mr. Brion adhered to this practice. He also programmed some pieces that Sousa was constantly featuring.

Three generations ago, before records and radio, it was the travelling band that introduced Verdi, Wagner, Tchaikovsky and other "serious" composers to American audiences. So Mr. Brion led his band in Rossini's "William Tell" Overture and the finale of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony.

In between there were several solos. Every band concert had its brilliant cornetist, and on this occasion Robert Nagel came forth to play H. L. Clarke's "Bride of the Waves," complete with dizzy high notes and triple-tonguing. He followed this with a Victor Herbert piece in which he was assisted by two of the Yale Band cornetists.

Linda Nichols, a young mezzo-soprano, sang the "Adieu, forests" from Tchaikovsky's "Jeanne d'Arc." John

Swallow played a trombone solo—Arthur Pryor's "Thoughts of Love," after which he picked up a tuba and made his way through "Debutante" by H. L. Clarke.

There were some all but unknown Sousa works—selections from "The Free Lance" and the suite named "Impressions at the Movies." The titles of the three movements of the movie suite give the idea: "The Serenaders," "The Crafty Villain and the Timid Maid," and "Balance All and Swing Partners." It was period stuff, some of it tongue-in-cheek.

But it was the Sousa marches that brought the house down. None was listed on the program; they all appeared as encores. But by intermission there were "Washington Post," "Thunderer," "Glory of the Yankee Navy," and the "U.S. Field Artillery," during which the boys in the band broke into song—"Over hill, over dale . . ."—and all eight cornets and two trumpets stood up front.

After intermission came "Sabers and Spurs," "Nobles of the Mystic Shrine," and—inevitably, to close the concert—"The Stars and Stripes Forever," with half the band at the front of the stage and the flag descending from above.

Here, of course, Sousa was supreme. Nobody wrote better marches, and wonderfully infectious pieces the Sousa marches are. Feet tapped, faces smiled, neighbors winked at one another. They are marvellous works, and the fact remains that they have far outlived the learned music written by the highly regarded composers of Sousa's day. Anybody who could so tap the psyche as Sousa did had to have a high order of creativity.

The Yale Band is a nice, tidy group. There were a few rocky moments here and there, but the tone was suave, the intonation accurate, and the general approach youthfully lusty. Mr. Brion really did re-create a period, in a simple, honest way, and everybody at the concert walked out feeling a lot happier than when they had entered.

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